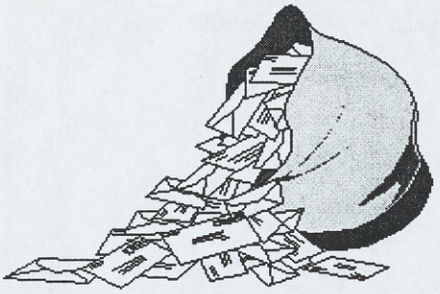

Lambda Letters Project

32609

Vol. 7, No. 5 May, 1999 www.lambdaletters.org LambdaLP@aol.com (916) 965-6851

LLP Board Update

New Officers Elected

The annual meeting of the Lambda Letters Project was held in Sacramento on April 24th. At the meeting the following officers were elected:

Jan Hansen, Chair
Lori Norman, Vice-chair
Lynn Dobbs, Recorder
Michael Butler, Treasurer

Lavender Library, Archives and Cultural Exchange Sacramento, CA

Stefan Grünwedel, past board chair, announced his retirement from the board. He has served long and well and we will miss him. Stefan has also been our newsletter editor for several years and he will continue to serve the Project in that capacity. We deeply appreciate the very professional image that he has created for us with our newsletter.

Alan Beach, former vice-chair, also did not seek reelection. However, he will continue to serve on the board and offer his valuable advice on fund-raising. Alan is a professional fund-raiser for a prominent Bay Area charity.

Here is a brief description of the officers who were elected or reelected at the annual meeting:

Continued on page 12

LGBT Issue Update

Teachers Are Protected

In a very welcome decision, the office of California's Labor Commissioner has ruled that the Rio Bravo–Greeley Union School District violated the law by agreeing to parents' demands to remove their children from the classroom of award-winning teacher James D. Merrick. At one point 15 students were removed from Merrick's class and placed in study hall instead.

The rural school district outside Bakersfield began receiving the demands from parents after newspapers reported that Merrick had been involved in efforts to oust the Rev. Douglas Hearn from the Kern County Human Relations Commission. Hearn had remarked that gays are sick and should not be allowed to teach children. Parents assumed that Merrick is gay and demanded that their children be removed from his classes.

A ruling from the California Labor Commissioner's office stated that by granting the parents' requests, the school district wrongfully fostered different treatment of Merrick based upon his perceived sexual orientation. Merrick never indicated publicly what his sexual orientation is.

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Lambda Letters Progress Report

Messages Collected

March, 1999	11,345 letters & e-mails
In all of 1999	20,372 letters & e-mails

Dollars Spent

March, 1999	$1,740
In all of 1999	$5,170

Can You Help?

Please support the very important work of the Lambda Letters Project with your contributions.

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Lambda Letters Project

Statement of Purpose

To promote people of color, feminist, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and HIV/AIDS status advocacy, and to bring people of color, women, lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgendered persons, and persons affected by or living with HIV/AIDS into full participation in the mainstream of American society now, exercising all the privileges and responsibilities thereof.

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Publication of the name of any person or organization in articles or advertising in the Lambda Letters Project newsletter is not to be construed as any indication of the sexual orientation of such person or organization.

The Lambda Letters Project does not sell or loan its mailing list to anyone. We give no information about who is, or is not, a member of the Project. We do, occasionally, send mailings on behalf of other worthwhile organizations, but this is done by our own volunteers so that no other organization has the opportunity to copy our mailing lists.

The Lambda Letters Newsletter is published monthly except in December by Lambda Letters Project Inc., 6212 Silverton Way, Carmichael, CA 95608.
Postmaster: send address changes to the address above.

Advertising Rates

Business-card sized ads (3½" × 2") $10 per issue, quarter-page ads $20 per issue, half-page ads $30 per issue, full-page ads $50 per issue. Deadline for payment and camera-ready copy, along with your name and phone number, is the 25th of each month.

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Have you experienced employment discrimination because of your actual or perceived sexual orientation? If so, you may register a complaint with one of the following Division of Labor Standards Enforcement district offices.

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Los Angeles (213-897-4037)	Marysville (916-741-4061)
Oakland* (415-557-7878)	Redding* (415-557-7878)
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People of Color Issue

Recognizing the HIV/AIDS Crisis in Communities of Color

by Marty Martinez

Communities of color are disproportionately impacted by HIV disease, as the following statistics indicate. People of color account for the majority of all new AIDS cases in California. While African Americans comprise only 7 percent of the California population, they total 16 percent of pre-1997 reported AIDS cases and 21 percent of all 1997 cases. AIDS cases among Latinos/as are increasingly alarmingly—from 18 percent of all pre-1997 AIDS cases to 27 percent of all 1997 AIDS cases. In fact, AIDS is the leading cause of death in the nation among African Americans between the ages of 25 and 44.

There is growing awareness of HIV's disproportionate impact. Last year, the Congressional Black Caucus called on Secretary of Health and Human Services Donna Shalala to declare a national state of emergency regarding HIV and AIDS in the African American community. In California, Alameda County last year declared a state of emergency in its African American population due to HIV's disproportionate impact, and activists are working in other counties, including Los Angeles County, to have similar states of emergency declared.

In response to the call by the Congressional Black Caucus, the federal government appropriated $156 million to combat AIDS in communities of color. Advocates on the federal level are fighting to have that appropriation renewed and enhanced for this coming budget cycle.

At the state level, the California HIV Advocacy Coalition—a statewide coalition of HIV advocates performing policy work at the state level—has advocated for a resolution that would put the California legislature on record acknowledging the HIV crisis in communities of color and calling upon the federal government to respond. Senators Kevin Murray and Richard Polanco, the respective chairs of the African American and Latino/a caucuses, have agreed to put forward such a resolution.

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Women's Issue

Domestic Abuse, the Continuing Problem

by Boyce Hinman

In February we asked you to write to the members of the California Senate's Industrial Relations Committee in support of S.B. 56, introduced by Senator Hilda Solis (D–El Monte). You sent over 500 letters and the bill was approved by that committee.

Now the bill is in the Senate Appropriations Committee. However, Senator Solis expects it to be approved in that committee also and to be sent to the floor of the Senate to be voted on there. She asks that we write our senators in support of this important bill.

One of our Project members, Ruthie Loeffelbein, wrote us a letter in response to our February article on S.B. 56. We think that what she wrote illustrates why S.B. 56 is so important, so we are publishing her comments as follows:

"Domestic violence is indeed a pervasive problem. One out of three U.S. women will be in an abusive relationship at some time in her life. This includes physical battering and mental or psychological battering. Both are equally devastating. Women of all ages, economic levels, ethnic backgrounds, religions, etc. are battered by respectable, often charming men. Even same-sex partnerships can include domestic violence.

"Domestic violence doesn't just happen to 'them.' It also happens to us—our mothers, sisters, daughters, coworkers, and neighbors. And yes, it is primarily men who batter. Nationally, 98 percent of domestic abuse victims are women.

"Let me touch on two disturbing questions that I often hear.

"**Disturbing Question #1:** What about men? What do you do for the men who get beat on by women? Response: Why this question when almost all domestic violence victims are women? Is a problem only valid if it affects men? (In any event, S.B. 56 would provide the same benefits to male victims of domestic violence as to women. — Ed.)

"**Disturbing Question #2:** Why doesn't she leave? Response: That's the wrong question because it puts the responsibility on the abused person. The question should be 'Why does he do that? Why does

Continued on page 13

HIV/AIDS Issue

Supporting HIV Confidentiality

by Boyce Hinman

Last year Assemblymember Carole Migden (D–San Francisco) sponsored A.B. 1663, which would have required the State Department of Health Services to implement a unique identifier system in order to conduct HIV surveillance and improve data collection while maximizing confidentiality protections. The bill passed the legislature but was vetoed by Governor Wilson. Now with the election of Gray Davis, we have a new opportunity to win.

Assemblymember Migden has reintroduced the bill this year as A.B. 103, which would require the State Department of Health Services to implement a unique identifier system in order to conduct HIV surveillance and to improve data collection while maximizing confidentiality protections. It would use anonymous, unique codes, rather than patients' names, to track the spread of HIV.

The pressure for tracking the spread of HIV using patients' names comes as the result of the probably valid belief that we need to do a better job of measuring the true extent of those who test positive. We also probably need better demographic data (for instance, which cities, gender, ethnic groups, etc., have the greatest percentage of HIV-positive persons).

Some have suggested that the only way to gather accurate data is to require that the names of all people testing positive be reported to county health authorities. Name reporting, however, may be less than accurate and may cause many people to cease being, or remain, untested. A.B. 103 seeks a better way.

The bill was heard recently in the Assembly Health Committee. Lambda Letters members and friends sent over 500 e-mail messages of support to the committee in response to an e-mail alert on the bill. A.B. 103 was approved by the Health Committee and sent to the Assembly Appropriations Committee. We expect the bill to be approved by that committee and sent to the full Assembly. This month we ask you to write to your member of the Assembly in support of this important bill.

You can find a copy of A.B. 103 by searching for that bill number on the Web at www.sen.ca.gov.

Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender Issue

Public Employees' Health Benefits for Domestic Partners

by Carolynn Race

Assemblymember Wally Knox (D–Los Angeles) has authored several bills this session that would benefit LGBT communities. One such bill is A.B. 107, which would provide state and local employers the ability to offer health care coverage, through the Public Employees' Medical and Hospital Care Act, to the domestic partners of their employees.

A.B. 107, if passed, would strengthen California's support for LGBT persons—by recognizing domestic partners as "family members." The struggle to attain domestic partner benefits brings LGBT advocates one step closer to equal rights—and, in the process, increases public understanding of our lives and families.

The bill passed the Assembly Public Employees, Retirement and Social Security Committee on April 21st with a vote of 5–2. All Democratic assemblymembers voted for the bill: committee chair Lou Correa (Anaheim), John Dutra (Fremont),

Marco Firebaugh (East Los Angeles), Mike Honda (San Jose), and Wally Knox (West Los Angeles). The two Republican members of the committee opposed the bill: Bruce Thompson (Temecula) and Anthony Pescetti (Elk Grove). At press time, the bill is waiting to be heard in the Assembly Appropriations Committee. If passed, it will then be heard on the Assembly floor.

Act now and write members of the State Assembly. Tell them to support A.B. 107. California has a chance now, with a friendly legislature and governor, to support *all* families. Urge them to do just that.

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May Legislative Update

The following report gives you a detailed description of the content and status of many of the bills that are important to our community. As you will see from the following list, we are doing very well in the legislature this year.

First some background information. As bills go through the state legislature they are reviewed and voted on in committees before they are voted on by the full Assembly or Senate. First they are voted on by a policy committee, which considers whether the bill makes good policy. If the bill is approved by that committee, and it is determined that passage of the bill is likely to cost money for state or local government, it is then sent to the Appropriations Committee. In theory this committee determines whether the bill makes sense from a financial perspective and whether or not there is money available to cover its costs. In reality, there is a lot of politics and policy in the Appropriations Committee's deliberations.

Each bill goes through the same committee process in both houses of the state legislature. There are deadlines. Each bill must have been approved by the policy committee in its house of origin no later than May 14th. (The house of origin of a bill beginning with the initials A.B. is the Assembly. The Senate is the house of origin for all bills beginning with the initials S.B.) Bills with any fiscal impact on state or local government have until May 21st to be approved by their policy committees. All bills needing appropriations committee approval must be approved by the appropriations committee in their house of origin no later than May 28th. Finally, all bills must be approved on the floor of their house of origin no later than June 4th. Any bill that misses any of these deadlines dies and can go no further.

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This article was prepared in late April. As a result, some votes may have occurred after this newsletter was printed. In those cases, we will report the outcome of those votes in our next newsletter.

HIV/AIDS Issues

A.B. 16 (Mike Honda, D–San Jose)
Purpose: Under current law the state and counties split the costs of providing publicly funded in home supportive services for aged blind and disabled persons. However, if the counties or the agencies they contract with to provide the services grant a pay raise to the workers providing the care, the counties must foot the whole cost of the raises. This bill changes the law to say that even these pay raises will be funded equally by the state and the counties.
Status: Passed by its policy committee and sent to Assembly Appropriations Committee. Put on that Committee's suspense file while they determine where the money for it is to come from.
LLP Position: Support.

A.B. 103 (Carole Migden, D–San Francisco)
Purpose: Would require the State Department of Health Services to implement a unique identifier system in order to conduct HIV surveillance and improve data collection while maximizing confidentiality protections.
Status: Passed by its policy committee and sent to Assembly Appropriations Committee. Put on that Committee's suspense file while they determine where the money for it is to come from.
LLP Position: Support

A.B. 142 (Kevin Shelley, D–San Francisco)
Purpose: To require that every health care service plan provide medical care in accordance with accepted medical practices and provide emergency health care services and to ensure confidentiality of the medical information of an enrollee. Plans must provide access to a wide variety of primary health care providers and specialty health care providers to ensure that the enrollee is able to choose a qualified doctor or other health care provider.
Status: Passed by its policy committee and sent to Assembly Appropriations Committee. Scheduled for a vote in that committee on April 28th.
LLP Position: Support.

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May Legislative Update

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A.B. 155 (Carole Migden, D–San Francisco)
Purpose: This bill would allow people with AIDS who return to work, but whose income is below 250 percent of the federal poverty standard, to continue to receive MediCal benefits.
Status: Passed its policy committee and is in Assembly Appropriations Committee. No hearing date set yet.
LLP Position: Support.

A.B. 217 (Scott Wildman, D–Glendale)
Purpose: This bill would provide that specified drugs or agents that are approved by the federal Food and Drug Administration for use in the treatment of AIDS or HIV shall be added to the drug formularies used by defined Medi-Cal managed care plans and by primary care providers under specified case management contracts.
Status: Passed by its policy committee and the Assembly Appropriations Committee. Sent to the full Assembly for a vote.
LLP Position: Support.

A.B. 518 (Kerry Mazzoni, D–San Rafael)
Purpose: This bill would permit local jurisdictions to establish legal clean needle and syringe exchange programs in California to reduce the spread of AIDS and other diseases spread by the shared use of needles.
Status: Passed by its policy committee and the Assembly Appropriations Committee. Sent to the full Assembly for a vote.
LLP Position: Support.

A.B. 851 (Fred Keeley, D–Santa Cruz)
Purpose: Expands the AIDS prevention education requirement in grades 7–12 to include instruction in prevention of sexually transmitted diseases and would require related instructional materials to be medically accurate and free of race, gender, and ethnic bias.
Status: Passed by its policy committee and sent to Assembly Appropriations Committee. No date for hearing in that committee yet.
LLP Positions: Support.

A.B. 1047 (Marco Firebaugh, D–Huntington Park)
Purpose: Would require that the state make new AIDS medications, provided under the AIDS Drug Assistance Program (ADAP), available to patients within 30 days of being notified that the drugs have been approved by the FDA for the treatment of AIDS.
Status: Passed by the Assembly Health Committee and sent to the Assembly Appropriations Committee. No date set yet for a vote in that committee.
LLP Position: Support.

A.B. 1053 (Helen Thomson, D–Vacaville)
Purpose: Would prohibit HMOs from forbidding doctors from prescribing medications that cost more than permitted by the HMO and would prohibit HMOs from reducing reimbursement to doctors for doing so.
Status: Passed its policy committee and referred to the Assembly Appropriations Committee. No date set yet for a vote in that committee.
LLP position: Support.

S.B. 77 (Kevin Murray, D–Los Angeles)
Purpose: Existing law says that a worker's family may apply for a worker's compensation death benefit when the worker dies from a job-related accident or illness. The claim must be submitted within a specified time from the onset of the job related illness or accident. A longer time is allowed in deaths from asbestosis because of the typically longer time from exposure to asbestos and death from asbestosis. S.B. 77 says that HIV and AIDS have a similarly long period of development and so should have a similarly long time during

Continued on page 7

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May Legislative Update

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which a claim for a worker's compensation death benefit may be claimed.
Status: Passed by its policy committee and the Senate Appropriations Committee Sent to the full Senate for a vote..
LLP Position: Support.

S.B. 1029 (Ray Haynes, R–Riverside)
Purpose: To require the reporting of, to county health agencies and others, the names of those who test positive for HIV.
Status: The Senate Judiciary Committee sent the bill back to the Senate Rules Committee for re-referral to the Senate Health and Human Services Committee.
LLP Position: Oppose.

S.B. 1258 (Richard Polanco, D–Los Angeles)
Purpose: Would require California to solicit approval from the federal government for California to provide Medi-Cal coverage to individuals who are HIV positive, but who do not have AIDS. Current federal regulations limit the provision of Medi-Cal to people who have AIDS or who are otherwise disabled.
Status: Passed by its policy committee and sent to the Senate Appropriations Committee. Scheduled for a vote on April 26th.
LLP Position: Support.

S.J.R. 1 (Jackie Speier, D–San Mateo)
Purpose: This measure would memorialize the federal government to take steps to ensure that persons abandoned by Medicare HMOs have access to other HMOs or Medigap policies and to rescind the determination that disabled persons under 65 years of age enrolled in HMOs do not have the same rights as other Medicare enrollees. Would also memorialize the president to issue an executive order directing his administration to work closely and coordinate with California and other states to guide and assist Medicare enrollees who are abandoned by their HMOs to obtain new Medicare coverage.
Status: Was passed by the Senate and sent to the Assembly. Not assigned to an Assembly Committee yet.
LLP Position: Support.

Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgendered Issues

A.B. 26 (Carole Migden, D–San Francisco)
Purpose: This bill would define "domestic partners" and provide for the registration of domestic partnerships with the secretary of state. The bill would also specify procedures for the termination of domestic partnerships.
Status: Passed by Assembly Health Committee and sent to the Assembly Appropriations Committee. No date set for a vote in that committee yet.
LLP Position: Support.

A.B. 107 (Wally Knox, D–Los Angeles)
Purpose: This bill would authorize state and local governments to provide health care benefits to the domestic partners of their employees.
Status: Passed by the Assembly Public Employees Retirement and Social Security Committee and sent to the Assembly Appropriations Committee. No date set for a vote in that committee yet.
LLP Position: Support.

A.B. 208 (Wally Knox, D–Los Angeles)
Purpose: This bill would provide that the penalty for a defendant who is found guilty of murder in the first degree is imprisonment in the state prison for life without the possibility of parole if the victim was intentionally killed because of the victim's disability, gender, or sexual orientation or because of the defendant's perception of the victim's disability, gender, or sexual orientation, and this allegation has been charged and found to be true.
Status: Passed by the Assembly Public Safety Committee and sent to the Assembly Appropriations Committee for a vote on April 28th.
LLP Position: Support.

A.B. 222 (Sheila Kuehl, D–Santa Monica)
Purpose: Called the Dignity for All Students Act.

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May Legislative Update

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Would amend the California Education Code to add "sexual orientation" to those sections that now protect students from other forms of discrimination. It would specifically bar sexual orientation discrimination in public education, including student programs and activities, athletics, curricula, employment, and financial aid.
Status: Was approved by its policy committee and sent to the Assembly Appropriations Committee. No date for hearing set yet.
LLP Position: Support.

A.B. 901 (Wally Knox, D–Los Angeles)
Purpose: Currently if an employer provides health insurance for the domestic partner of an employee, the employee must pay state income tax on the value of the insurance. This bill would exempt health insurance benefits for domestic partners from state income tax.
Status: Sent to Assembly Revenue and Taxation Committee for a vote on May 10th.
LLP Position: Support.

A.B. 1001 (Antonio Villaraigosa, D–Los Angeles)
Purpose: Would amend the California Fair Employment and Housing Act to prohibit employment and housing discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.
Status: Approved by two policy committees and sent to the Assembly Appropriations Committee. No date set for a vote in that committee yet.
LLP Position: Support

S.B. 38 (Joe Baca, D of Chino)
Purpose: Last year Senator Baca introduced a bill with a similar title which was worded in such a way that it threatened to allow employers to engage in employment discrimination against lesbians, gays, bisexuals and trans folks on the basis of the employer's religious beliefs. This year's bill simply restricts the authority of local governments to use zoning laws to limit the time, manner, or place in which a church or other religious institution may operate.
Status: Was approved by the Senate Local Government Committee and sent to the Senate Judiciary Committee. No date set for a vote in that committee yet.
LLP Position: Neutral.

S.B. 75 (Kevin Murray, D– Los Angeles)
Purpose: This bill would enact the Domestic Partnership Act of 1999, which would define "domestic partners" and provide for the registration of domestic partnerships with the secretary of state. The bill would also specify procedures for the termination of domestic partnerships.
Status: Passed by the Senate Judiciary Committee and sent to the Senate Appropriations Committee. No date set for a vote in that committee yet.
LLP Position: Support.

S.B. 118 (Tom Hayden, D–Los Angeles)
Purpose: To require employers to grant family and medical leave to employees who need to care for their domestic partners.
Status: Passed by the Senate Industrial Relations Committee and sent to Senate Appropriations for a vote on May 5th.
LLP Position: Support.

Person of Color Issues

A.B. 43 (Antonio Villaraigosa, D–Los Angeles)
Purpose: Existing law establishes the Healthy Families Program to arrange for the provision of health services to eligible children whose family's income is less than 150 percent of the federal poverty guidelines. This bill would increase the limit to less than 250 percent of the federal poverty level and would provide that a child who is otherwise eligible for participation shall not be denied eligibility based on the child's date of entry into the United States.
Status: Passed by the Assembly Health Committee and sent to Assembly Appropriations. No date set for a vote in that committee yet.
LLP Position: Support.

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May Legislative Update

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A.B. 63 (Denise Moreno Ducheny, D–National City)
Purpose: Would create an Office of Border Health, which would act to increase cooperation between Mexican and California/US health authorities in tracking disease, monitoring the health of persons along the border region, and would convene a task force of community stakeholders to help develop a strategic plan to address the health concerns in the border region.
Status: Approved by the Assembly Health Committee. Was put on the Assembly Appropriations Committee's suspense calendar, which means it will probably not be voted on until more is known about the proposed budget and the funds available for the bill.
LLP Position: Support.

S.B. 44 (Richard Polanco, D–Los Angeles)
Purpose: This bill says that the laws of California, including the restrictions on affirmative action, do not prevent governmental agencies from engaging in focused outreach and recruitment of minority groups and women if any group is under-represented in entry-level positions or in an educational institution.
Status: Was approved by its policy committee and sent by the Senate Appropriations Committee to the full Senate for a vote there.
LLP Position: Support.

S.B. 66 (Kevin Murray, D–Culver City)
Purpose: Existing law requires the Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training to develop and disseminate training for police officers including instruction on racial and cultural diversity in order to foster mutual respect and cooperation between law enforcement and members of all racial and cultural groups. This bill additionally would require the commission to develop guidelines that California law enforcement agencies would be required to adopt for the purpose of establishing race-neutral criminal profiles.
Status: Was approved by the Senate Public Safety Committee and sent to the Senate Appropriations Committee. No date set for a vote in that committee yet.
LLP Position: Support.

S.B. 78 (Kevin Murray, D–Culver City)
Purpose: Existing law requires the Department of Justice to issue an annual report containing the criminal statistics of the preceding calendar year. This bill would require this annual report to contain information about the race, ethnicity, approximate age, and gender of the people stopped in traffic stops.
Status: Was approved by the Senate Public Safety Committee and sent to the Senate Appropriations Committee. No date set for a vote in that committee yet..
LLP Position: Support.

S.B. 82 (John Vasconcellos, D–San Jose)
Purpose: This bill would provide that any alien who is otherwise eligible for Medi-Cal services, but who does not meet specified requirements relating to residency status (undocumented alien), is eligible for medically necessary pregnancy-related services.
Status: Is on the Senate Appropriations Committee's suspense file while they determine where the money for the bill will come from.
LLP Position: Support.

S.B. 145 (Teresa Hughes, D–Inglewood)
Purpose: This bill would strongly request the Regents of the University of California, and require the Board of Trustees of the California State University, to establish a pilot study that would create pools of talented students to which alternative admissions criteria to these schools may be applied, admit students from these pools, and monitor their academic success as compared to regularly admitted students.
Status: Was scheduled for a vote in Senate Education Committee on March 17th. Vote canceled at author's request. Author's staff says they will probably drop the bill because an admissions policy recently announced by the State University's Board of Regents makes it unnecessary.
LLP Position: Support.

Continued on page 10

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May Legislative Update

Continued from page 9

Women's Issues

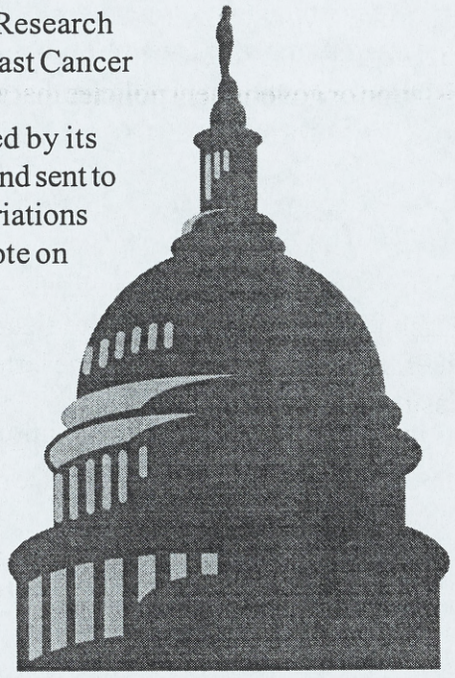
A.B. 40 (Howard Wayne, D–San Diego)
Purpose: This bill would establish the Breast Cancer Treatment Program for purposes of providing breast cancer treatment services to uninsured and underinsured women with incomes at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty level. Would require the State Department of Health Services to administer the program only when the Legislature has appropriated funds for the program.
Status: Approved by its policy committee and sent to the Assembly Appropriations Committee for a hearing on April 28th.
LLP Position: Support.

A.B. 324 (Steve Baldwin, R–La Mesa)
Purpose: This bill would require the State Board of Education to develop a program to provide abstinence education, as defined, and where appropriate, mentoring, counseling, and adult supervision to promote abstinence from sexual activity with a focus on those groups that are most likely to bear children out-of-wedlock. Would discourage education in use of contraceptives and other means to avoid out of wedlock pregnancy or transmission of sexually transmitted diseases.
Status: The author decided to do nothing with this bill until next year.
LLP Position: Oppose.

S.B. 56 (Hilda Solis, D–El Monte)
Purpose: Would prohibit employers from punishing employees who take time off to testify in court in domestic abuse cases as long as prior to taking off, they give reasonable notice to the employer that they are required to appear in court to obtain or attempt to obtain any relief to help ensure the health, safety, or welfare of a domestic violence victim or their child.
Status: Passed by the Senate Industrial Relations Committee and sent to the Senate Appropriations Committee. No date set for a vote in that committee.
LLP Position: Support.

S.B. 149 (Ray Haynes, R–Riverside)
Purpose: To set strict standards and restrictions on abortion providers.
Status: Was defeated in the Senate Health and Human Services Committee on April 14th.
LLP Position: Watch.

S.B. 193 (Joe Baca, D–San Bernardino)
Purpose: Existing law provides for the Breast Cancer Research Account in the Breast Cancer Fund. Ninety percent of the moneys in the Breast Cancer Research Account is allocated to the Breast Cancer Research Program created at the University of California. This bill would require the State Department of Health Services to offer for sale a breast cancer license plates to be sold at a price determined by the department, with the proceeds to be deposited into the Breast Cancer Research Account in the Breast Cancer Fund.
Status: Was passed by its policy committee and sent to the Senate Appropriations Committee for a vote on April 26th.
LLP Position: Support.



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Assertive Woman Wanted!

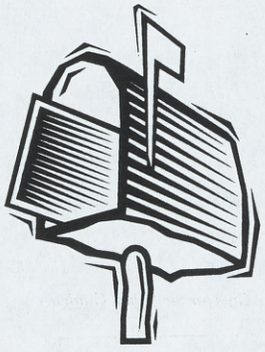
Do you get angry about how little the politicians are doing about breast cancer? Are you mad about the way they are nibbling away at a woman's right to choose? Do you get steamed about their inattention to the very serious problem of domestic abuse?

Don't get angry, write letters! In fact, get your friends and neighbors to write thousands of letters! "Oh sure," you ask, "how can I do that?"

Be our Women's Issue advocate!

Bring us your knowledge of the issues that women care about. We'll bring you information about the legislation or government policies that affect those issues. Write a brief letter and article supporting or opposing those bills and policies. We'll publish your letter and article in this newsletter, post them on our Web page, and distribute them via our Internet legislative alert system. The result: hundreds—sometimes thousands—of letters flowing into elected officials' offices. All because you wrote one letter and article on an issue that you care about.

If this idea intrigues you, consider becoming our Women's Issue advocate. If you have reasonably good writing skills and access to the Internet, you might be just the person for the job. We can show you how to find the legislation that affects the lives of women and train you in the process of writing letters to legislators. All you have to do is commit to writing one letter and article a month. If you'd like to give it a try, let us know by including a note when you return your signed letters to us. Or contact us at (916) 965-6851 or at LambdaLP@aol.com.



A Really Simple Way to Help Us Out

There's one very small thing you can do to make the life of one of our volunteers very much easier.

Ray Leber, a longtime member of our board of directors, gets much more mail than you do. He opens all the mail coming into Lambda Letters each month. (He also counts all signed letters returned to the Project, sends thank-you notes for the contributions and dues, repackages all signed letters, and prepares them for delivery to elected officials. He routinely processes over 2,000 letters a month.)

Here's how you can help him. Notice how you fold your signed letters before you place them into the return envelope. Many people fold each letter separately, rather than together as a stack. When that happens, Ray has to unfold each letter individually. As you can imagine, he'd rather unfold them just once, as a group.

This may seem like a small thing, but when you're opening close to 700 envelopes each month, it becomes a big thing. Your assistance in this matter will be greatly appreciated.

Legislative Updates on LLP Web Site

The legislative updates printed each month in our newsletter are also posted on the Lambda Letters Web page. The Web edition of the list is updated at least twice a month, usually around the first and fifteenth of the month—sometimes more often. If you have access to the Web, you can find the latest information on legislation of importance to the community. Just point your browser to www.lambdaletters.org and click on the Legislative Update button.

Don't Know Who Represents You?
Just ask us and we'll send you a complete list of your elected officials. Or go to www.lambdaletters.org to find out who represents you.

New Officers Elected

Continued from page 1

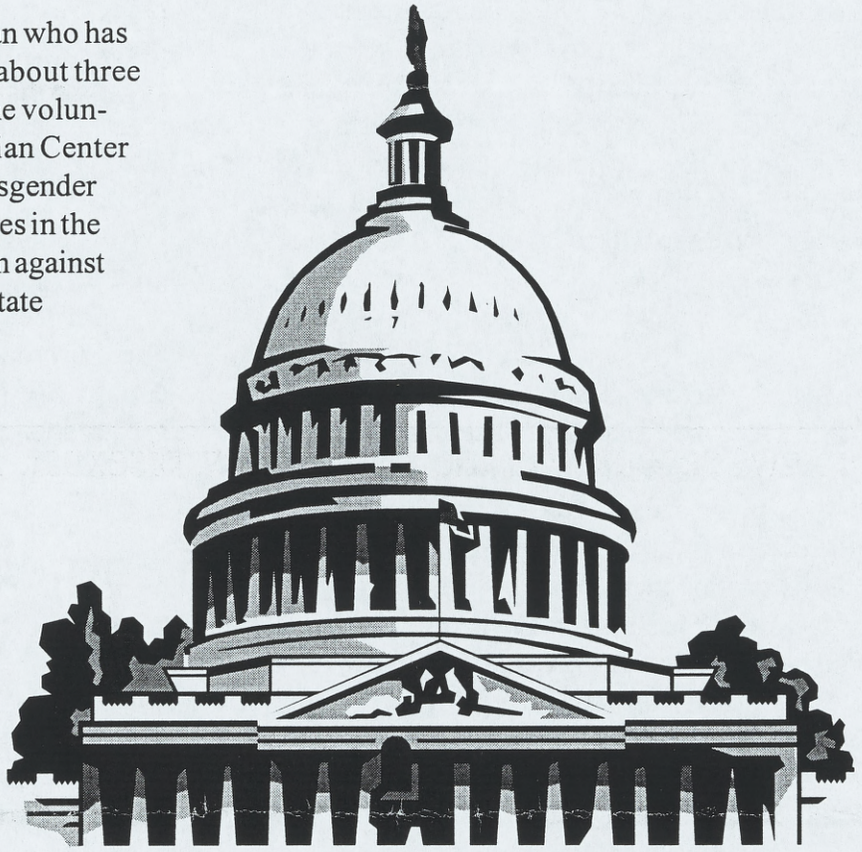
- **Jan Hansen** is a bisexual woman from San Diego. She has been an important member of the board for several years, most recently serving as Lambda Letters' recorder. Jan has been active in BiPol San Diego, a bisexual political action group; the San Diego Bisexual forum; Rainbow Outreach of the First Unitarian Universalist Church of San Diego; and the Speakers Bureau of the San Diego Lesbian and Gay Community Center. She also cofounded Partners for Peace with her partner, Lynn Dobbs.

- **Lori Norman** is a transgendered woman who has been a member of Lambda Letters for about three years. She is also a registered nurse. She volunteers at the Los Angeles Gay and Lesbian Center and participates in the trans group, Transgender Menace of Los Angeles. Lori participates in the effort to get a bill banning discrimination against the trans community introduced in the State Legislature.

- **Lynn Dobbs** is a bisexual man who has been a member of the board for several years. He is also the Webmaster for the Project's Web page and has built our online site into a very professional and useful asset for the Project. Lynn is affiliated with the Peace Resource Center of San Diego and BiPol of San Diego. He cofounded Partners for Peace with his partner, Jan Hansen. Lynn is also on the advisory committee of the California Ballet Company in San Diego.

- **Michael Butler** is a gay man who has been a member of Lambda Letters for several years. He has been Lambda Letters' treasurer for the past six months, filling in the remaining term vacated by our former treasurer, **Bob Maxie.** Michael was Mr. Sacramento Drummer of 1997–98 and is the current president of the Valley Knights Motorcycle Club. He is also a former member of the Sacramento Valley Bears.

We are proud of the Lambda Letters board's diversity and that it currently reflects the areas about which we write letters. However, we are eager to add more women and people of color to the board. Anyone interested in serving on the board is encouraged to contact us at (916) 965-6851 or by e-mailing us at LambdaLP@aol.com. You may also enclose a note when you return your signed letters to us.



AIDS Crisis in Communities of Color

Continued from page 3

To encourage the caucuses, we need to demonstrate that there is substantial grassroots support for this endeavor. Therefore, we ask to you sign the enclosed letter to a member of the California black or Latino/a caucuses supporting the call for a resolution putting the California legislature on record as recognizing this growing public health emergency.

Teachers Protected

Continued from page 1

The Labor Commissioner's decision ordered the school district to return the students to Merrick's classroom. However, Mr. Merrick reportedly feels classroom teaching is no longer an option for him because of the resulting hostile classroom environment. He and the district have reached a settlement which includes a public apology from the district, adoption of a policy to ban the removal of students from the classroom for discriminatory reasons, and the assignment of Merrick to develop a science curriculum for the school district. Merrick will retire from the district in June as he had planned before all of this happened.

Domestic Abuse: Continued Problem

Continued from page 3

he batter?' That put responsibility where it belongs, on the batterer.

"But to answer the original question, there are lots of reasons why she doesn't leave. Women have been taught all their lives, and in a variety of ways, that she shouldn't leave her man. Furthermore, when a woman does leave her abuser she often is in more danger than ever. The violence frequently increases and she is more likely to be killed by her batterer."

S.B. 56 responds to these issues by insuring that an abuse victim will not face reprisal from her employer if she takes time off to go to court to obtain a restraining order or some other form of protection from her abuser. S.B. 56 deserves your support. Please write to your senator in support of this bill.

the news resource of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender community

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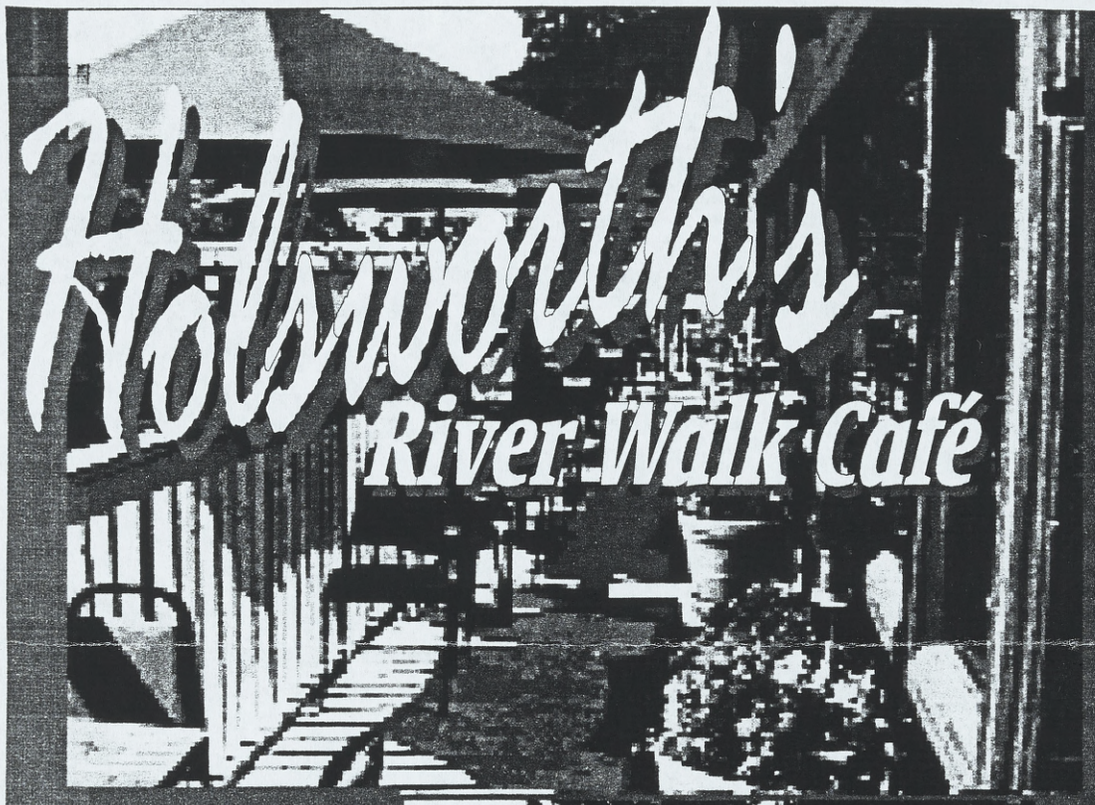

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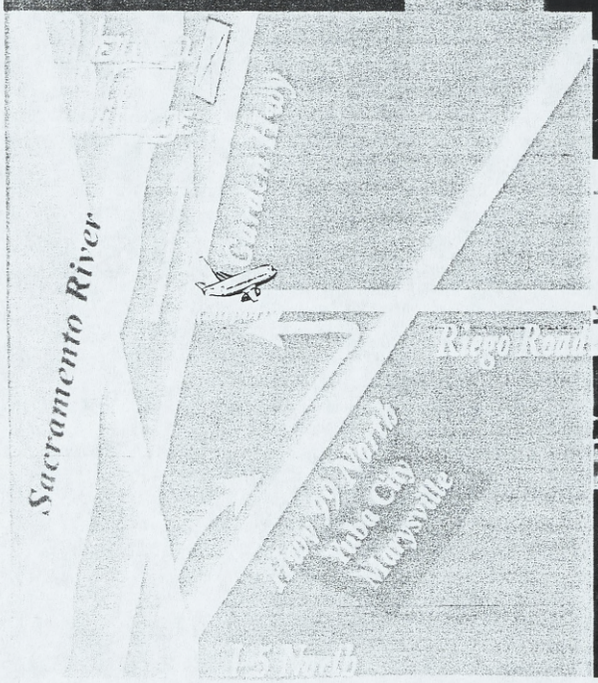

1,000 By 2,000

Progress Being Made

Last month we announced our campaign to have 1,000 members by the end of this year.

We have made a marvelous beginning. In April we added 64 members to the Project. Our most heartfelt thanks go out the folks who helped us do that. However, we now have just 567 members. So, we have a long way to go to reach our goal.

We believe you are in the best possible position to help us reach our goal. You know the services we provide and you know the people in your community who would be most interested in taking advantage of those services.

Won't you help us reach our goal by adopting a goal of your own. Will you pledge to recruit one new member for Lambda Letters in the next 30 days? Please find one new member and have that person complete and return the following application form. Thank you for your help in this matter.

Membership Application

Please enroll me as a member of the Lambda Letters Project.

I enclose a check, made payable to Lambda Letters, in the amount of:

☐ $35 membership.

☐ $20 limited income membership.

☐ Please accept my request for a waiver of dues.

Name -_____

Please print name clearly.

Address - _____ City - _____ ZIP - _____

Please print name clearly.

Send To:

The Lambda Letters Project
6212 Silverton Way
Carmichael, CA 95608

Waiver Policy

Lambda Letters does not deny membership due to lack of funds.
If necessary, please request a waiver of dues in the form below.